



# *News from* **SALEM COUNTY**

## Office of Public Information

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Mr. Earl R. Gage  
Salem County Administrator/Clerk of the Board  
Office Phone: (856) 935-7510 ext. 8614

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 28, 2011

### **SALEM COUNTY NOT ALERTED AS DELAWARE REFINERY RELEASES TOXIC CHEMICALS INTO THE AIR**

(SALEM, NJ) – On Sunday evening, November 27, Salem County’s riverfront residents were alarmed as fires at a Delaware City refinery lit the night sky and rumbling sounds like a freight train were reported as far east as Elmer. The Salem County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) immediately began receiving 911 calls of inquiry. OEM officials quickly contacted the New Castle County Fire Board and were informed that there had been a power outage and that the PBF refinery was simply burning off the stack.

Reports on Monday morning, however, indicated that the open-air, high-level incinerator towers on both the north and south ends of refinery had been activated. Delaware State officials confirmed that the flare released hazardous chemicals into the air, including more than 1,000 pounds of carbon monoxide, 10 pounds of hydrogen cyanide, 100 pounds of hydrogen sulfide and 500 pounds of sulfur dioxide. Officials also noted that the problem was brought under control shortly after midnight, with affected production units expected to come back into service over the next few days. The Delaware plant processes heavy, high-sulfur crude oil.

“I am appalled and dismayed that the State of Delaware chose not to follow protocol during this incident by submitting a report to the State of New Jersey and Salem County Office of Emergency Management,” said County Administrator Earl R. Gage. “We knew nothing about the release of toxic chemicals and any other sort of leak into the air.”

Procedures for reporting emergencies, such as those related to the PSEG Nuclear Generating Facility, are well established and in the past the County has enjoyed a close relationship with the New Castle County Fire Board.

“Salem County is very troubled by this incident” continued Administrator Gage. “We have requested that Delaware officials investigate the matter to assure that this failure to communicate does not occur again in the future.”



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The Salem County Administration Department and the Salem County Emergency Management Department are conducting their own investigation to determine the possible impact of the toxic chemicals release on Salem County residents and the environment.

Freeholder Director Lee R. Ware has sent a letter to the Governor of the State of Delaware asking him to have his office look into this matter also.